"A Spring Evening in the Forest of Mystery" by Watanabe Sayo

■ CALAMITIES THAT OCCURED DURING THE LONG, HARSH WINTER WERE ATTRIBUTED TO EVIL SPIRITS OR DEMONS.

Will that be all?
Yes.
Yes!
Thank you for asking.
Is your grandmother doing well?
It's fine.
I've got nothing better to do.
I appreciate you opening the store for me on your day off.
Glad to hear it.
I'll drop by for a visit once spring comes along.
We'll be looking forward to it!
Good-bye.
Have a safe trip.

春の宵、密かの杜

精霊と信仰の森を描く、フレッシュ感動

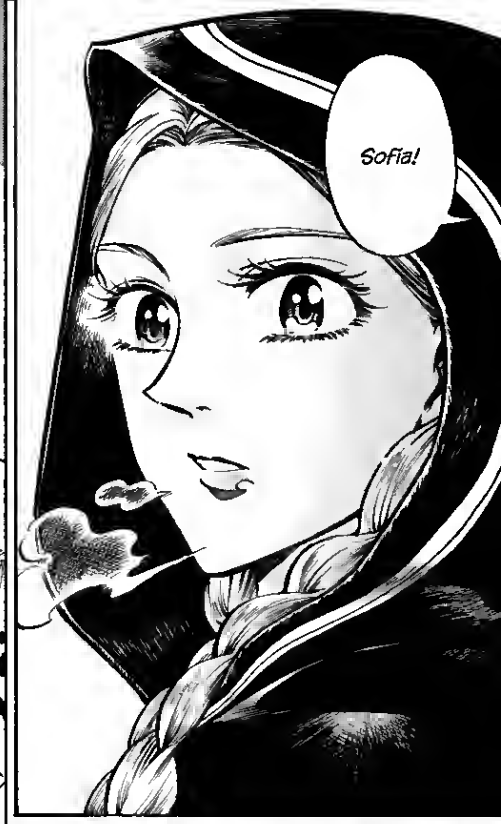
渡邉紗代
Saya Watanabe

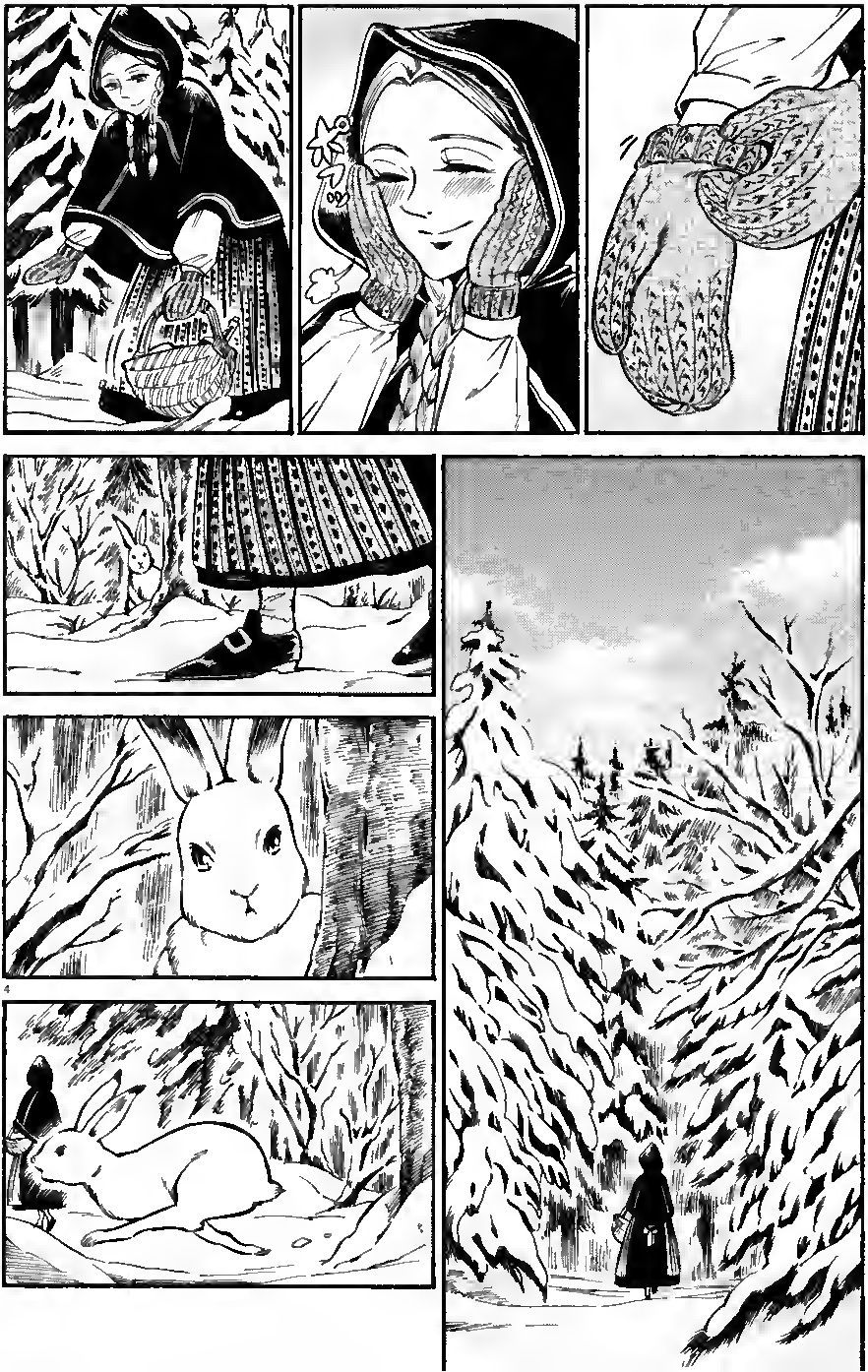
精霊の呼ぶ声が聞こえる。ザ・グレート・ネイチャー。

Oh dear!

You forgot something!

渡邉紗代のコミックス『少年の名は』全②巻、発売中ー

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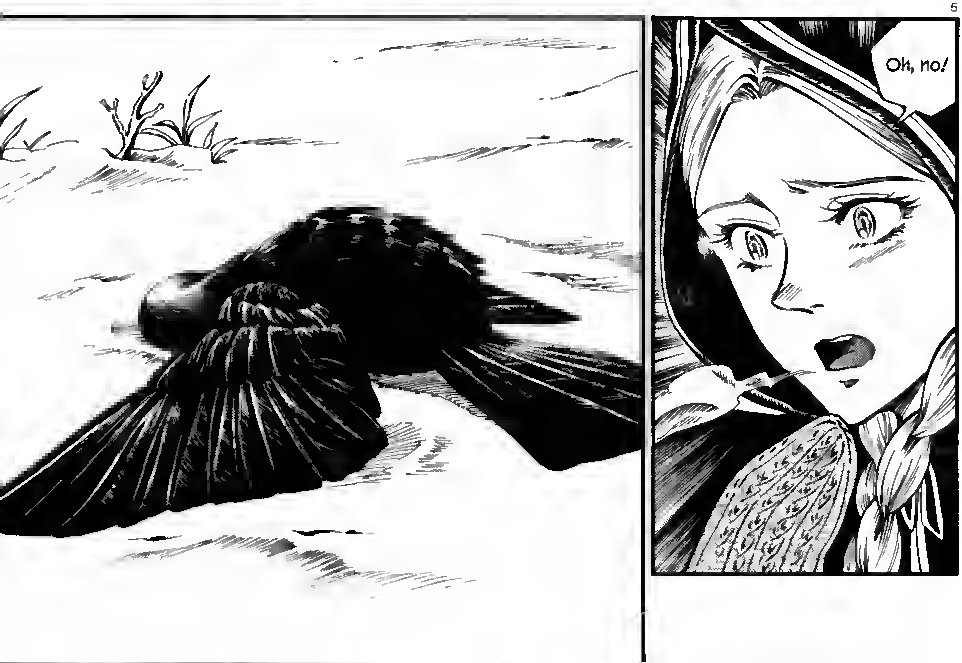
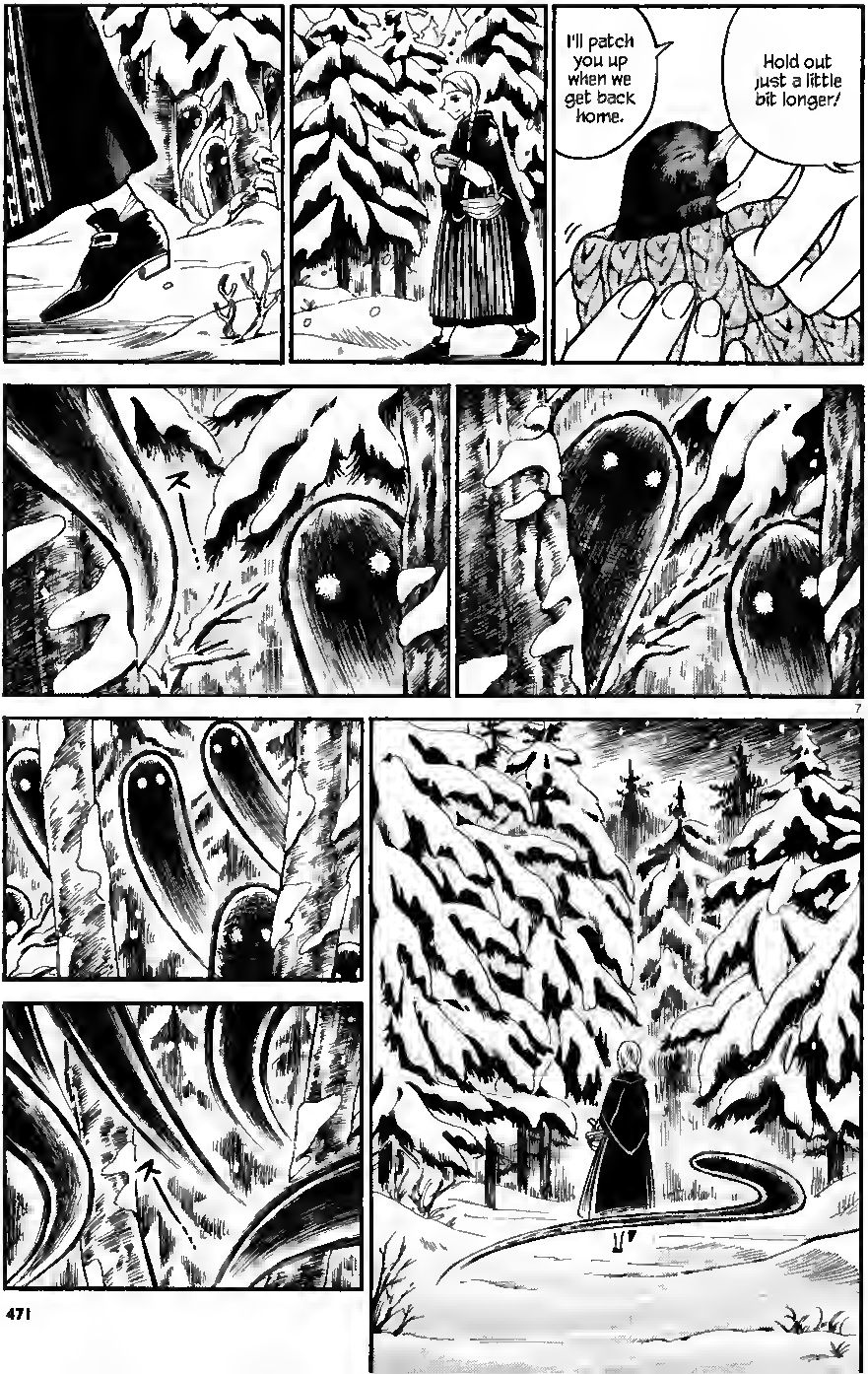
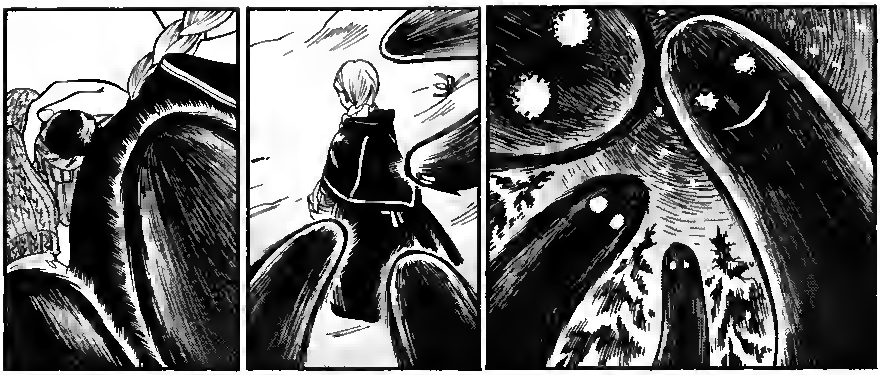
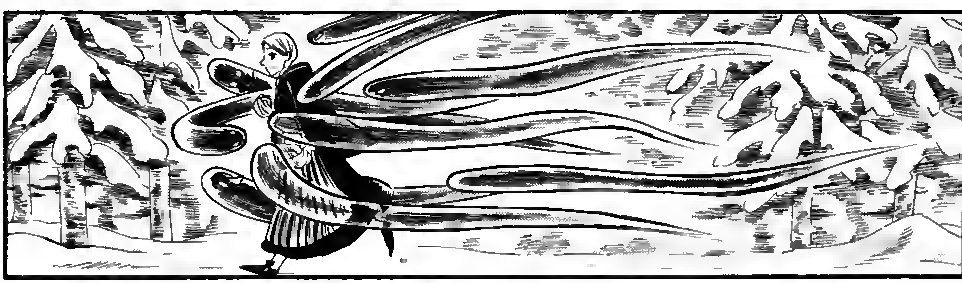
I'd better hurry home.
It's getting rather dark...


Oh, no!

Did you fall out of your nest?
THUMP
THUMP
...
THUMP
THUMP
6
A heart-beat...
Thank good-ness!
You're still alive.


I'll patch you up when we get back home.
Hold out just a little bit longer!





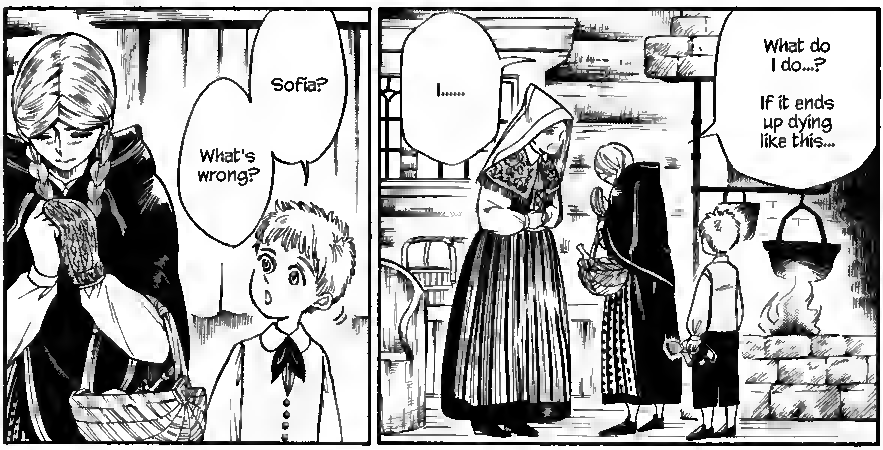
10

That lightning...
It means a snowstorm is coming!
Eek!!
I need to get home before I get caught up in the worst of it.
Time to get moving before it turns into a blizzard.
11

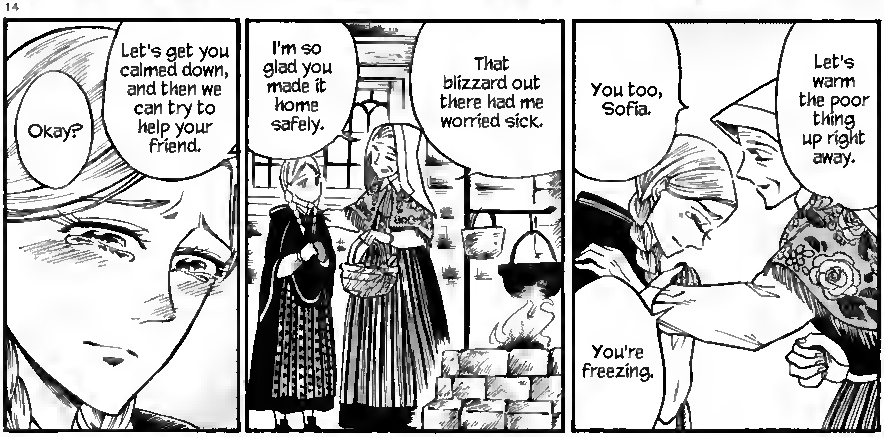
Hang on just a little bit longer!
We're almost home!
ヒョオオオ
Oh!
ガクッ
!!
ヒョオオ

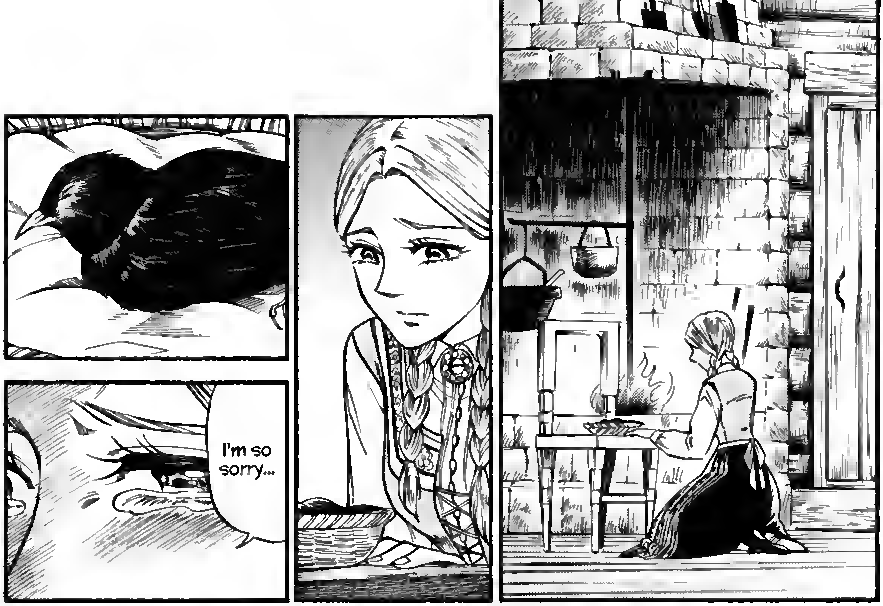
We made it!
It's okay, you're going to be just fine!
Grand-mother!
Ah.....!

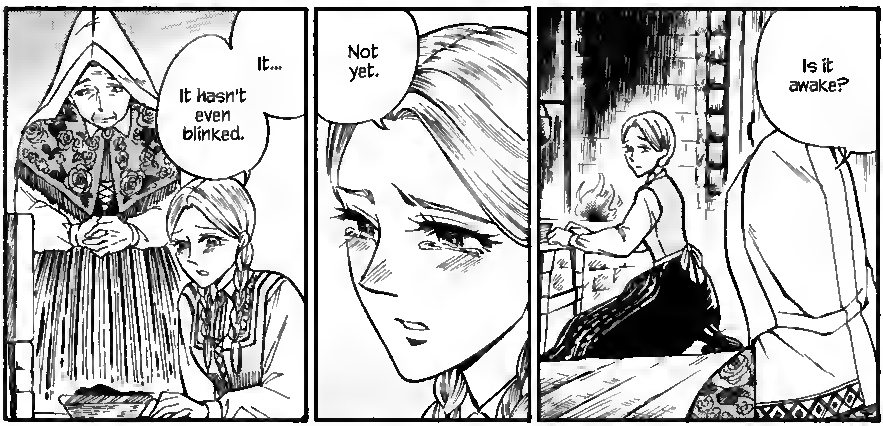
This poor bird!
We've got to help it!
It went limp and stopped moving!
It's heart...
It's heart was beating up until a moment ago...


What do I do...?
If it ends up dying like this...
I.....
Sofia?
What's wrong?

14


Let's warm the poor thing up right away.
You too, Sofia.
You're freezing.
That blizzard out there had me worried sick.
I'm so glad you made it home safely.
Let's get you calmed down, and then we can try to help your friend.
Okay?

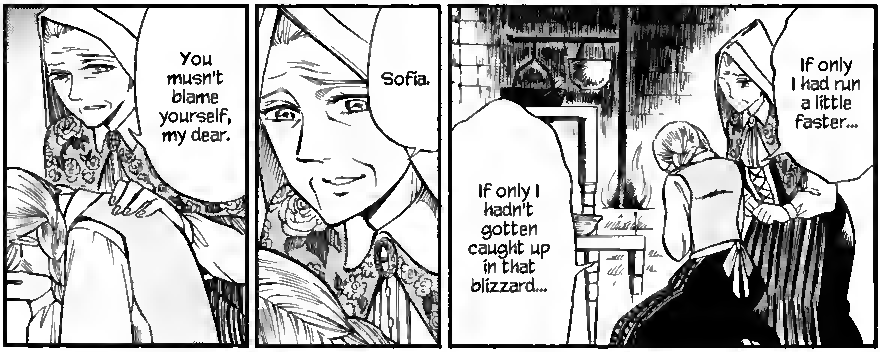

I'm so sorry...

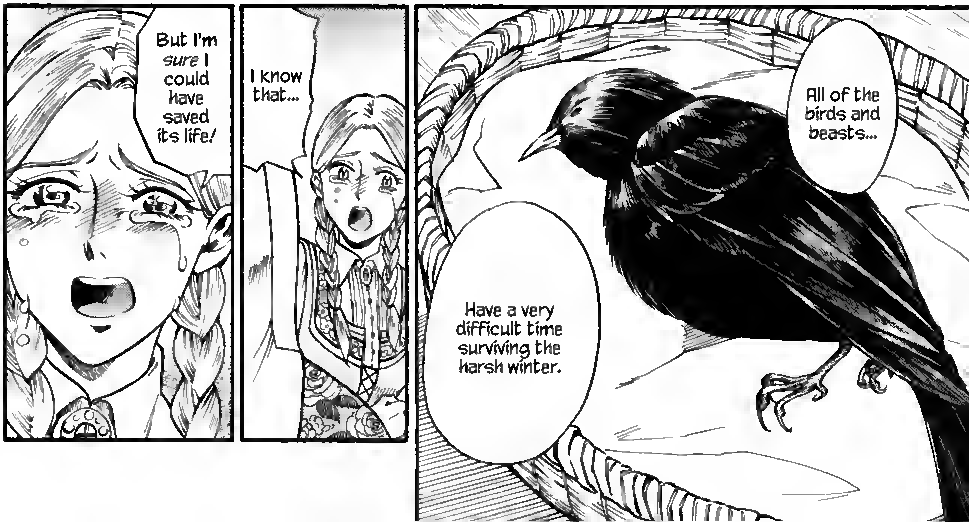

It...
It hasn't even blinked.
Not yet.
Is it awake?

15

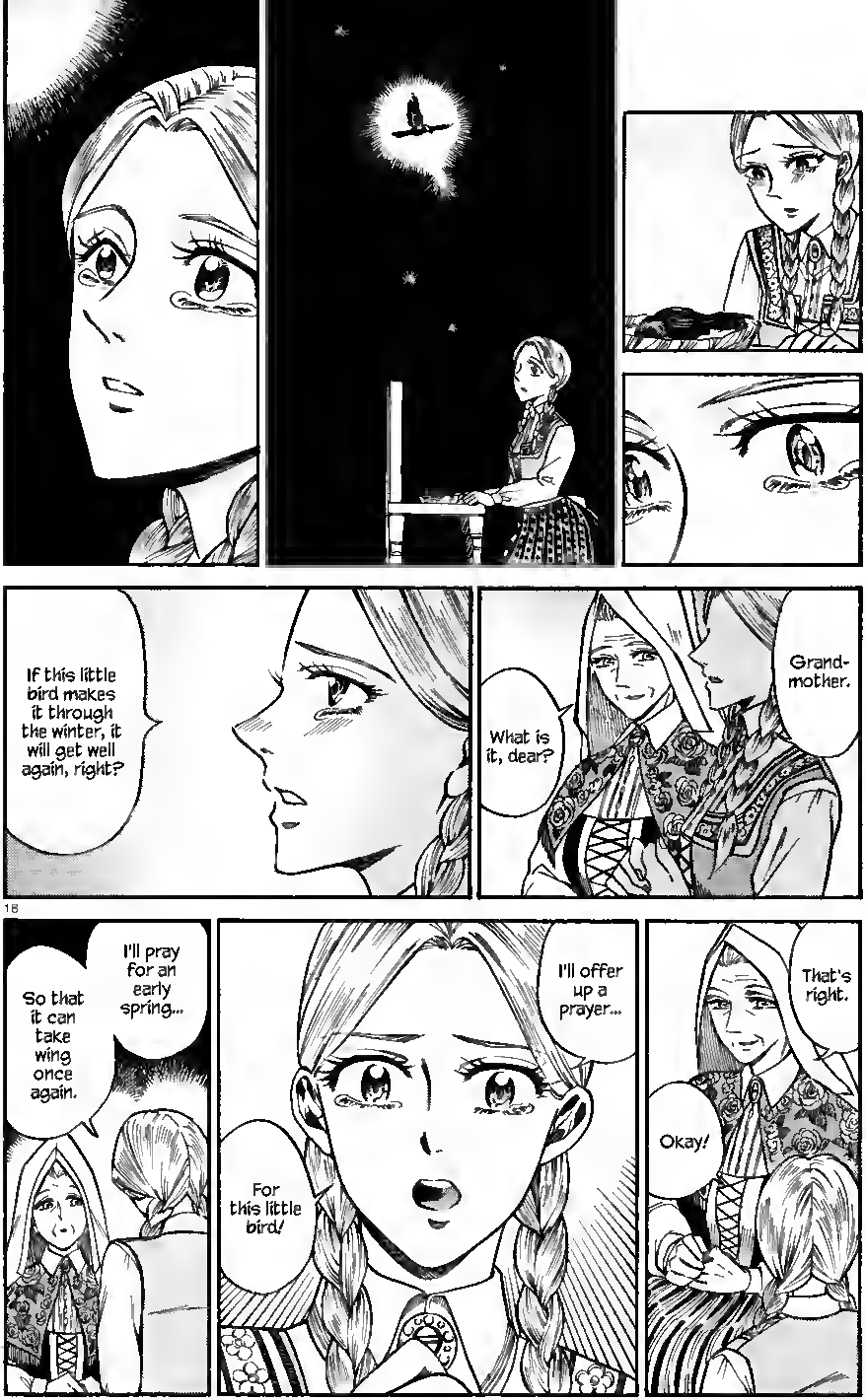
Sofia.
Already be too late...
I think it might...

But...!
Let's wait a bit longer, shall we?
It will take a while for the bird to make a full recovery.
It would have recovered by now!
If only I had gotten home faster...


You musn't blame yourself, my dear.
Sofia.
If only I had run a little faster...
If only I hadn't gotten caught up in that blizzard...


But I'm *sure* I could have saved it's life!
I know that...
All of the birds and beasts...
Have a very difficult time surviving the harsh winter.

Uuh...
.....
Life is so unfair...
Be strong.
Crying won't help your little friend, right?
Sofia.
Dry your tears, my dear.
17
That's right.
...until spring?
Look after this little bird until spring comes, right?
You're the one who's going to...
Wild creatures are more resilient than you may think.
When spring-time comes, this bird shall take flight again.


If this little bird makes it through the winter, it will get well again, right?
Grand-mother.
What is it, dear?
18
So that it can take wing once again.
I'll pray for an early spring...
For this little bird!
I'll offer up a prayer...
Okay!
That's right.

Saint Lucia, bringer of light and rebirth.
I know thy strength shall allow us...
To over-come this winter.
O Saint Lucia,
I pray to thee.

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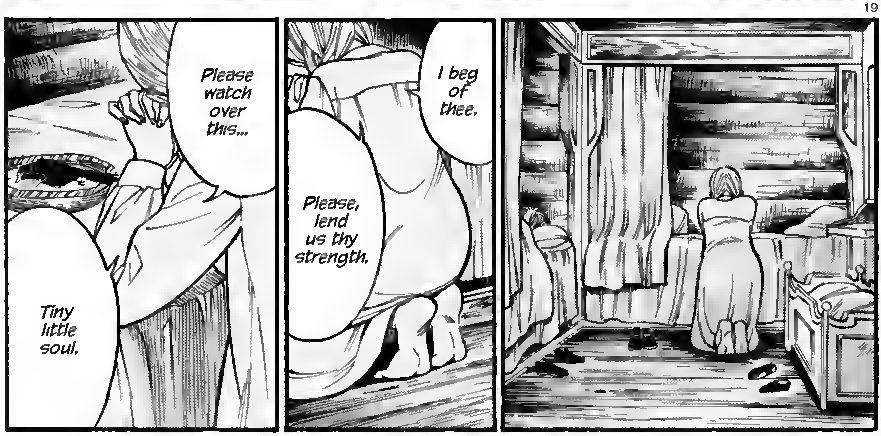
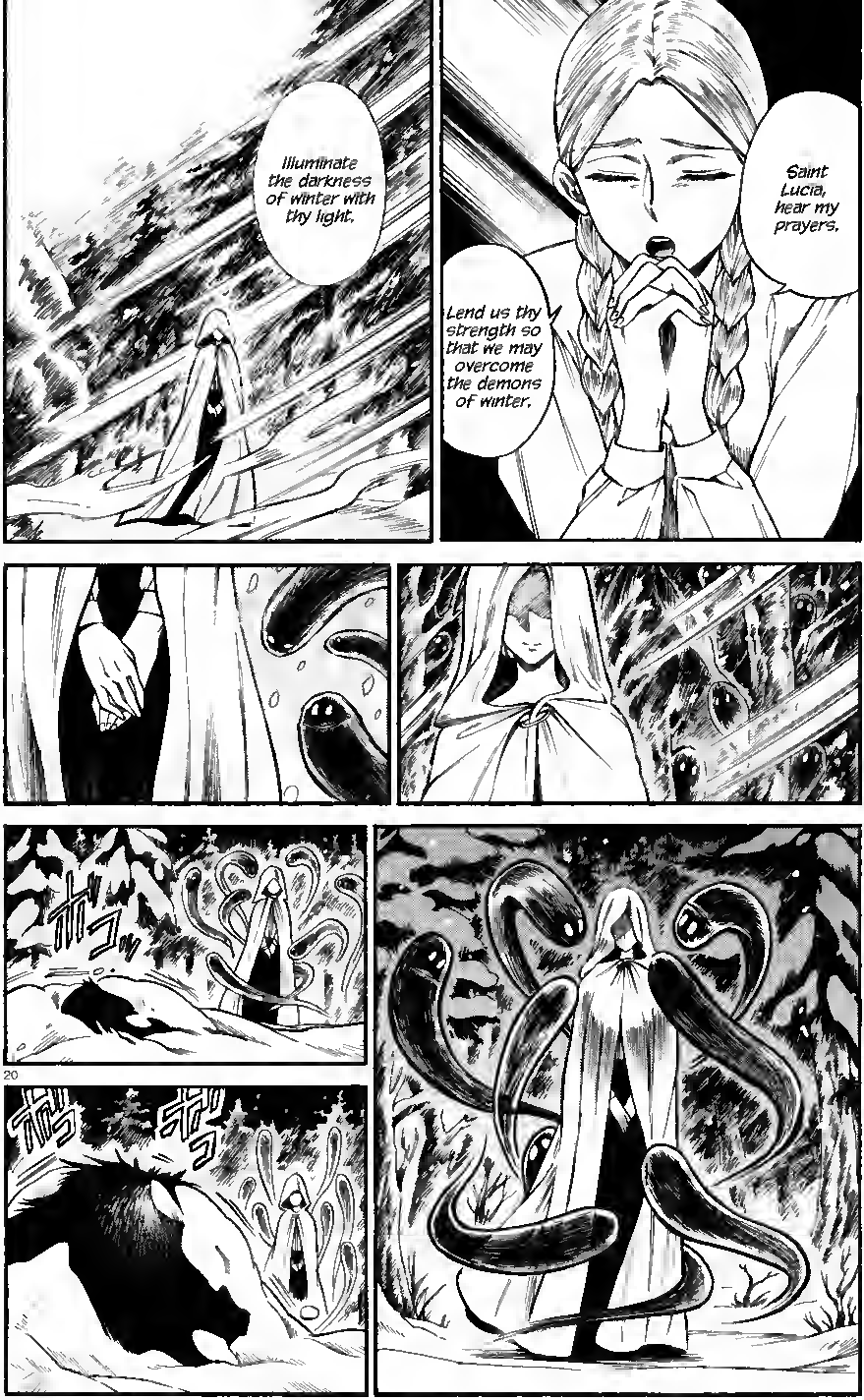

Please watch over this...
Tiny little soul.
I beg of thee.
Please, lend us thy strength.


Illuminate the darkness of winter with thy light.
Saint Lucia, hear my prayers.
Lend us thy strength so that we may overcome the demons of winter.
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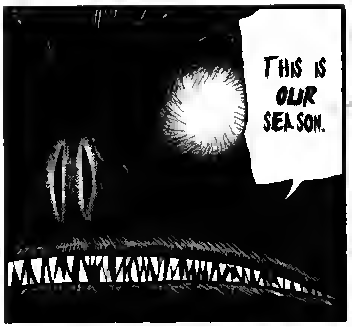
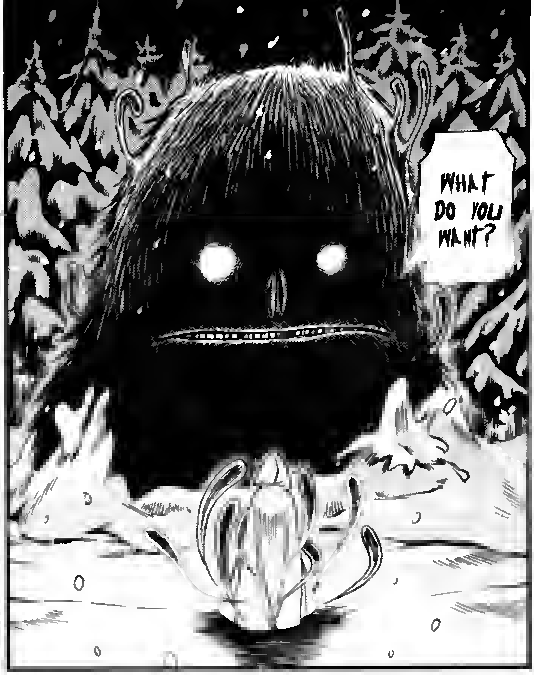
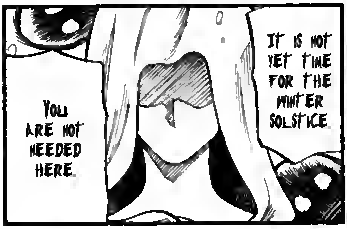
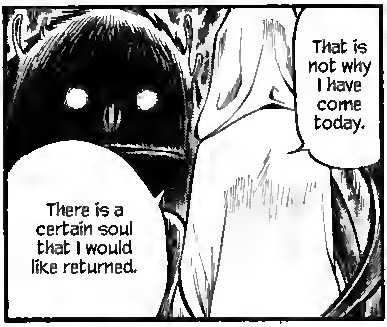
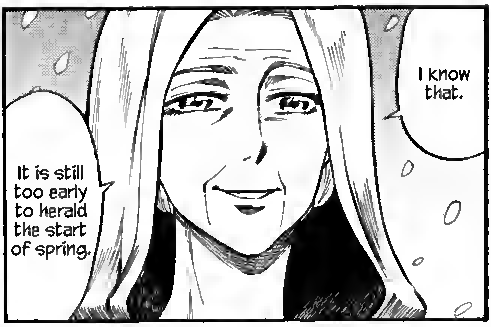
ボフッ
ボフッ


THIS IS OUR SEASON.

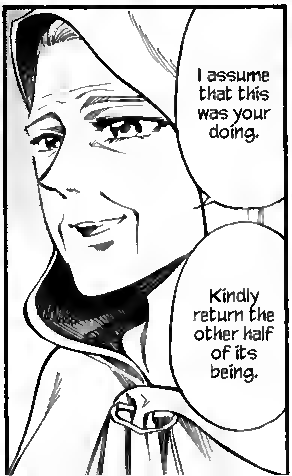

WHAT DO YOU WANT?


IT IS NOT YET TIME FOR THE WINTER SOLSTICE.
YOU ARE NOT NEEDED HERE.


That is not why I have come today.
There is a certain soul that I would like returned.

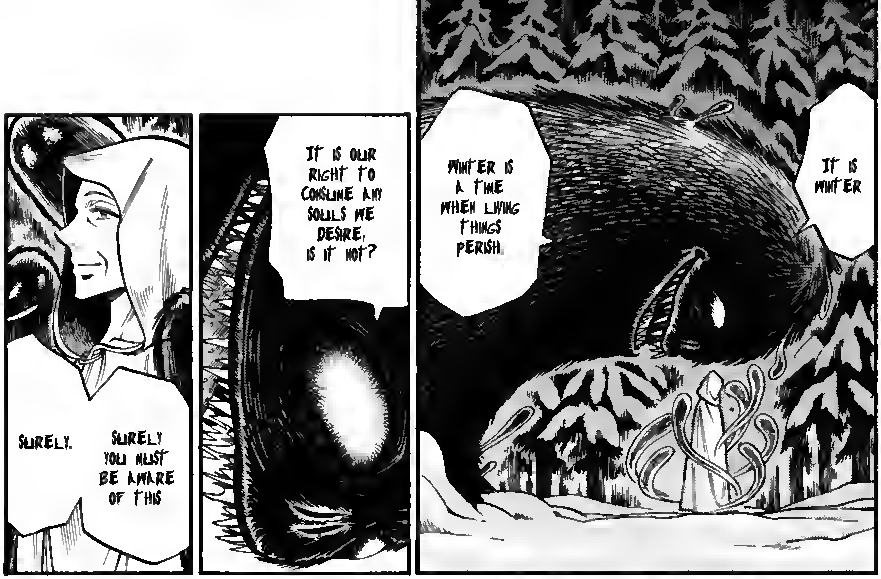

I know that.
It is still too early to herald the start of spring.

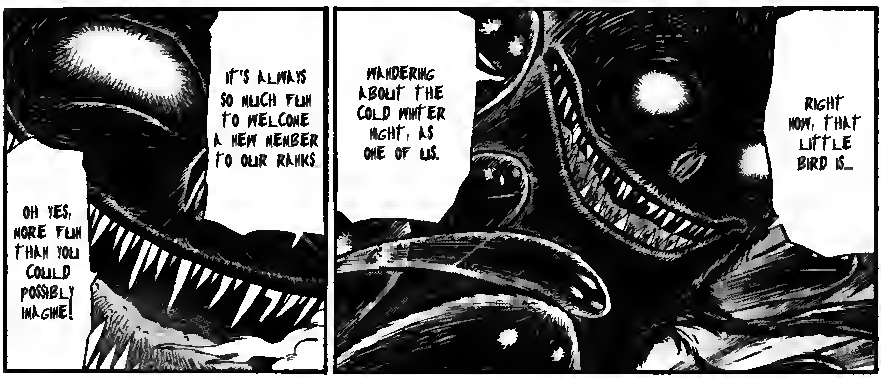
21

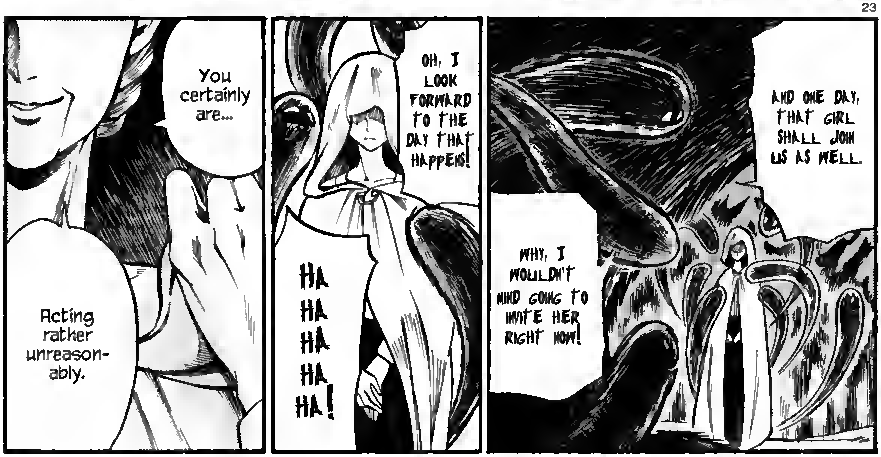

I assume that this was your doing.
Kindly return the other half of its being.

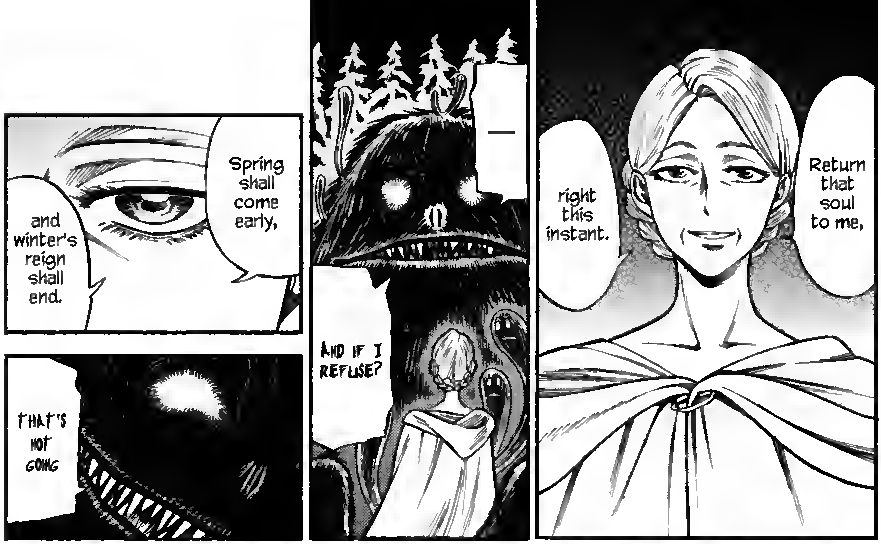
It belongs to a blackbird.
A girl picked it up today in the forest, around noon.

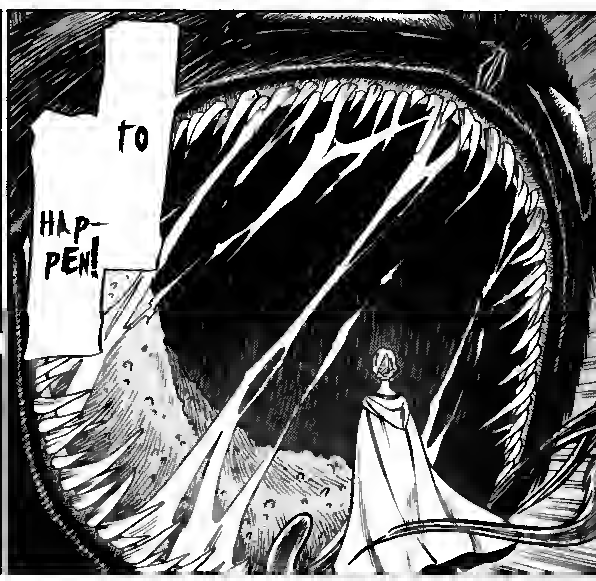
HA HA HA HA
HAH...
I know, but I would still have you return it to me.
IT CAN NEVER BE SET FREE AGAIN!
OH YES... WE MAY HAVE CONFINED THAT ONE. BUT ONCE A SOUL IS INSIDE OF US...
22
WELL, I DON'T CARE!
It is what that girl wishes.
She offered up an earnest prayer for this little bird's soul.


IT IS WINTER
WINTER IS A TIME WHEN LIVING THINGS PERISH.
IT IS OUR RIGHT TO CONSUME ANY SOULS WE DESIRE, IS IT NOT?
SURELY YOU MUST BE AWARE OF THIS
SURELY.


RIGHT NOW, THAT LITTLE BIRD IS...
WANDERING ABOUT THE COLD WINTER NIGHT, AS ONE OF US.
IT'S ALWAYS SO MUCH FUN TO WELCOME A NEW MEMBER TO OUR RANKS
OH YES, MORE FUN THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY IMAGINE!


AND ONE DAY, THAT GIRL SHALL JOIN US AS WELL.
OH, I LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY THAT HAPPENS!
You certainly are...
WHY, I WOULDN'T MIND GOING TO WHITE HER RIGHT NOW!
HA HA HA HA HA!
Acting rather unreasonably.


Spring shall come early,
and winter's reign shall end.
—
AND IF I REFUSE?
Return that soul to me,
right this instant.
THAT'S NOT GOING


TO
HAP-
PEN!

THAT'S NASTY.
AAAHH

24

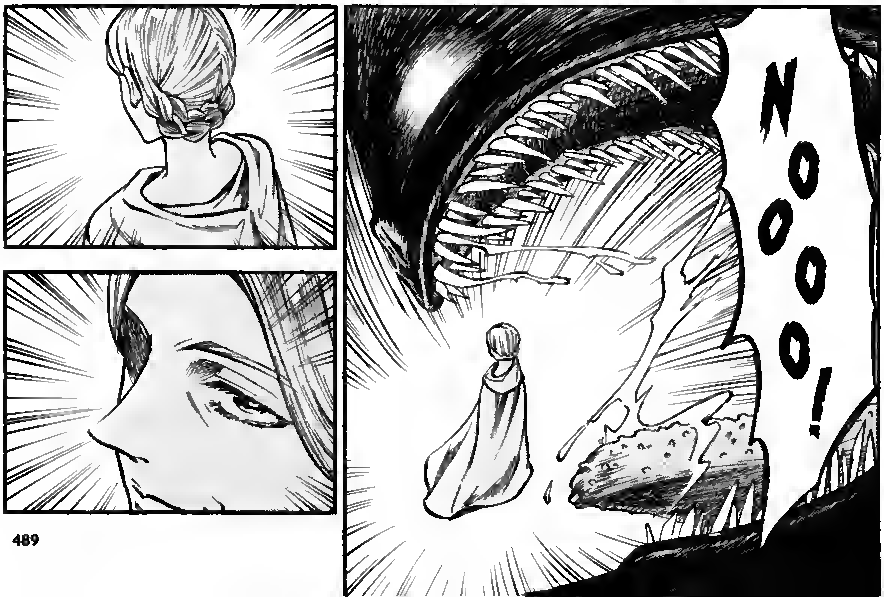
Did you *really* think that I would succumb to the darkness so easily?

THAT WAS LIKE EATING A ROTTING CORPSE
I MUST CONFESS, SAINT'S FLESH IS ABSOLUTELY REVOLTING

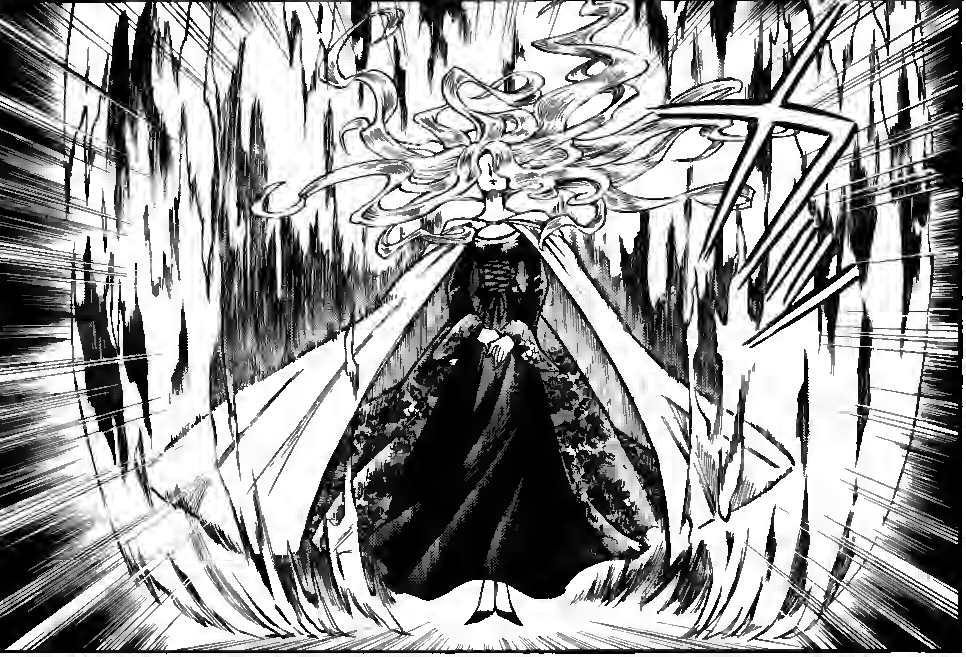
How naïve.
Now, why don't you return that soul to me?

HOW ABOUT

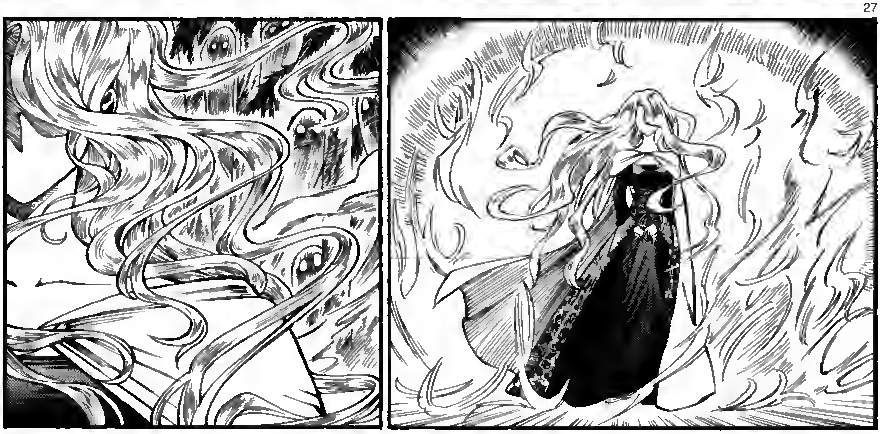
25

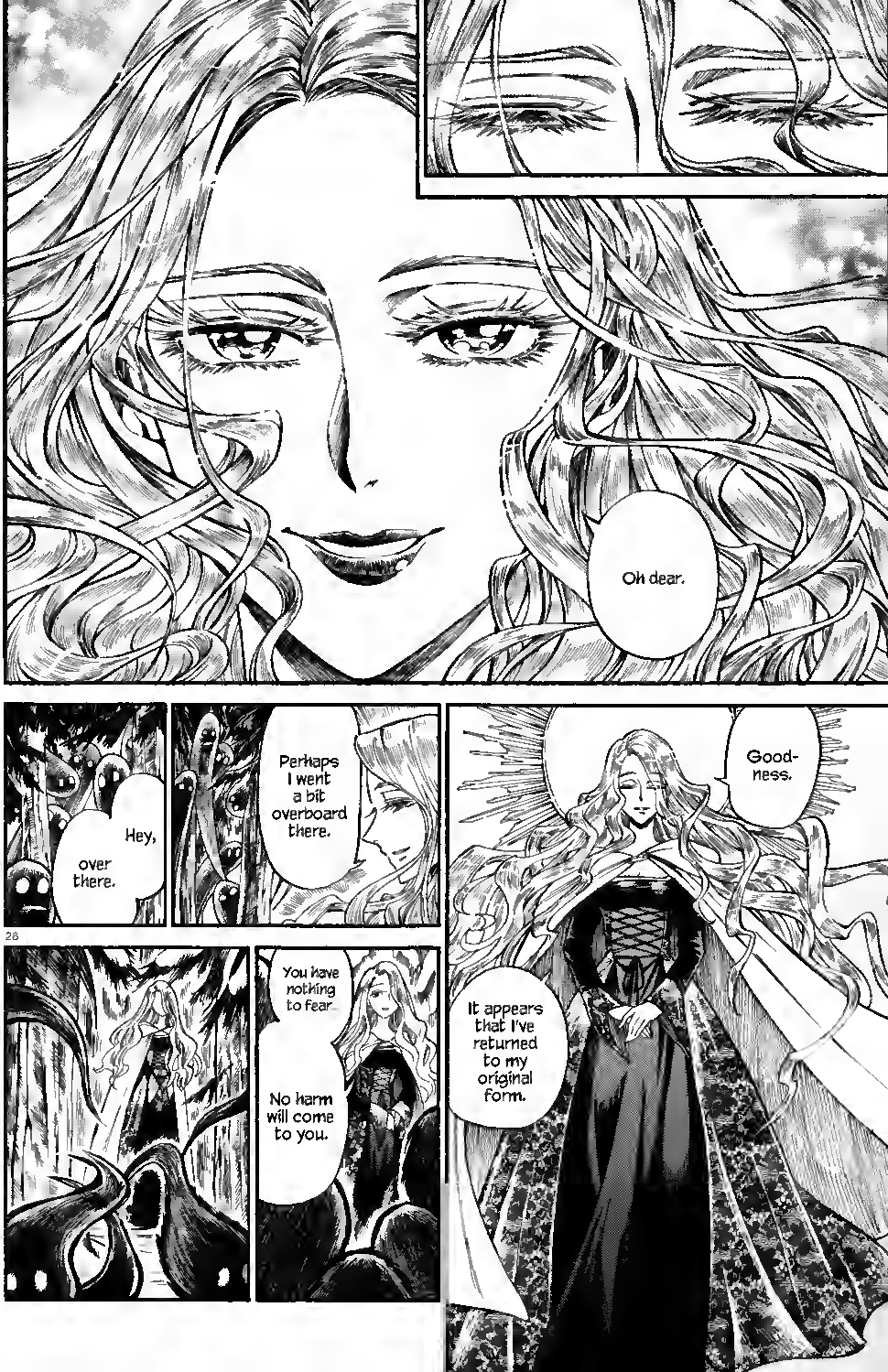

NOOO!

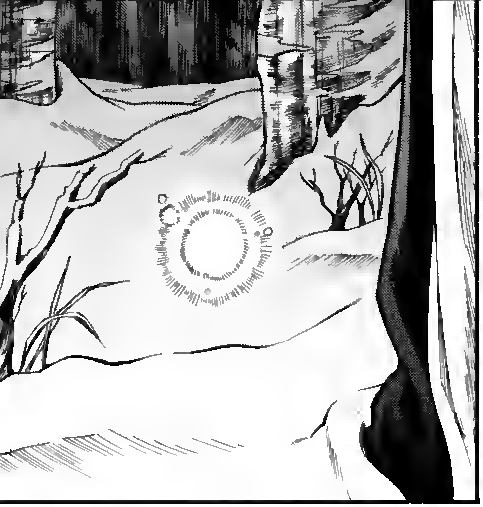
What a pity.
This year's winter is about to be cut short.
Alas, if only you had listened to my simple request,
You would have been able to linger in the darkness for a while longer.
GRGH!
Let there be light upon this darkness.
And let earnest prayers find an answer.



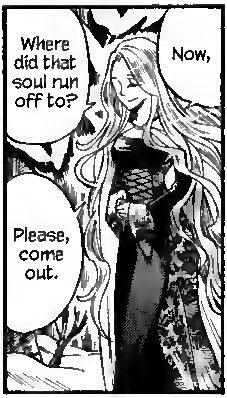
27

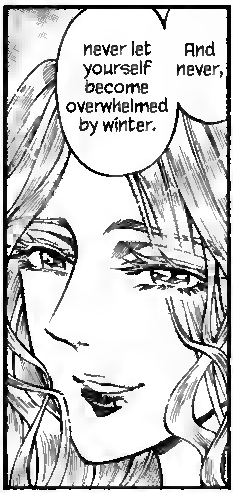



Oh dear.
Hey, over there.
Perhaps I went a bit overboard there.
Good-ness.
It appears that I've returned to my original form.
You have nothing to fear.
No harm will come to you.

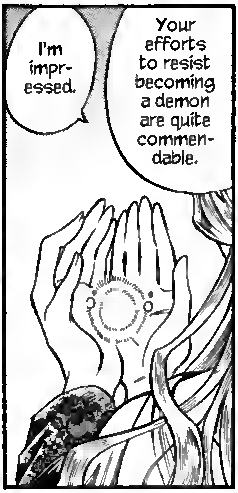


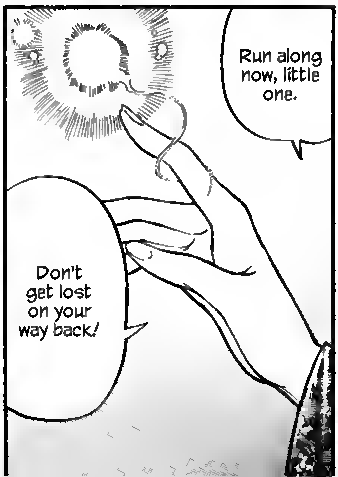
Oh, my.
So *that's* where you were hiding.


Where did that soul run off to?
Now,
Please, come out.


And never,
never let yourself become overwhelmed by winter.

I bestow upon you the role of harbinger.
You shall usher in the spring
Until then, make sure to live every day to its fullest.


Your efforts to resist becoming a demon are quite commendable.
I'm impressed.


Run along now, little one.
Don't get lost on your way back!

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30
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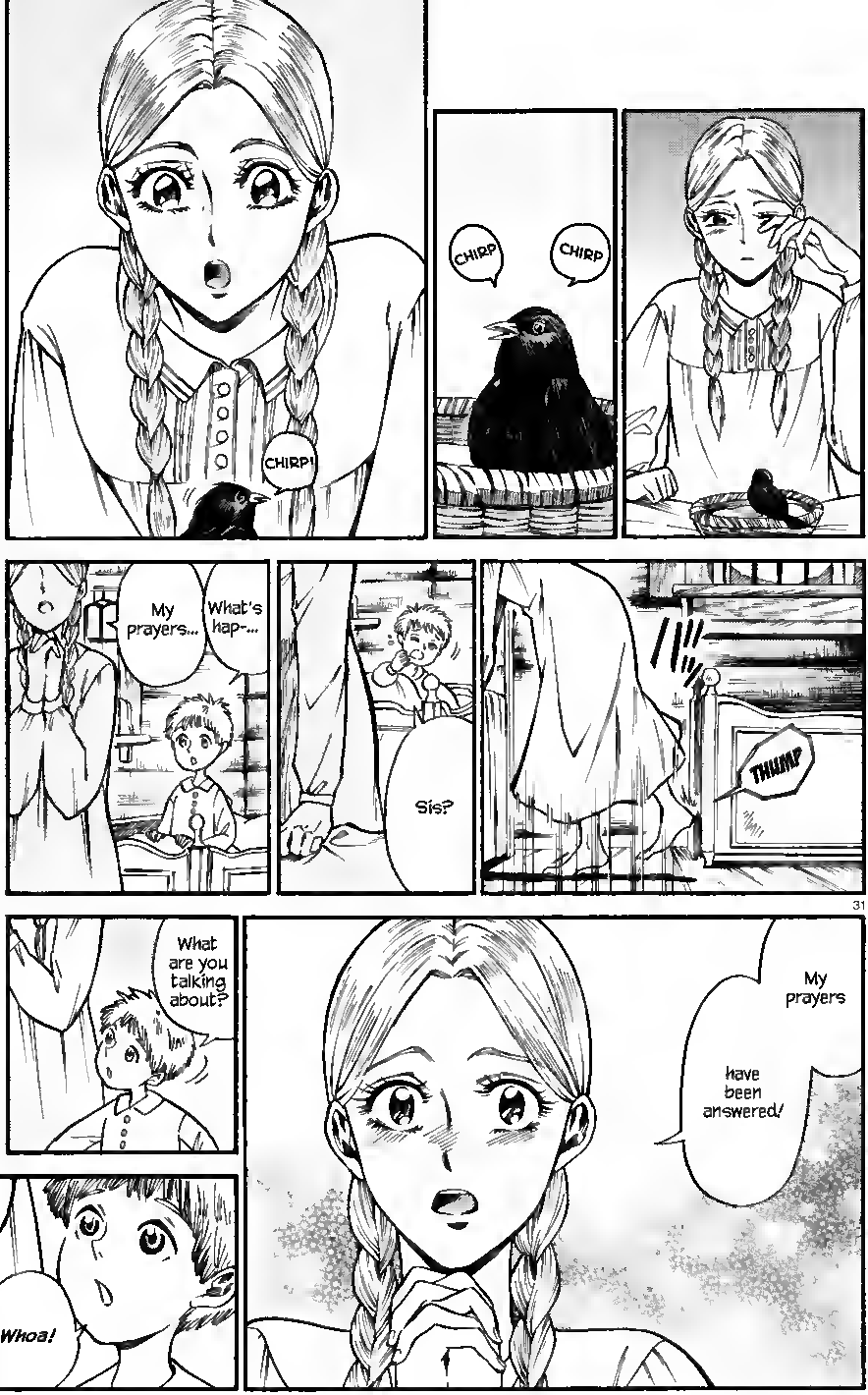
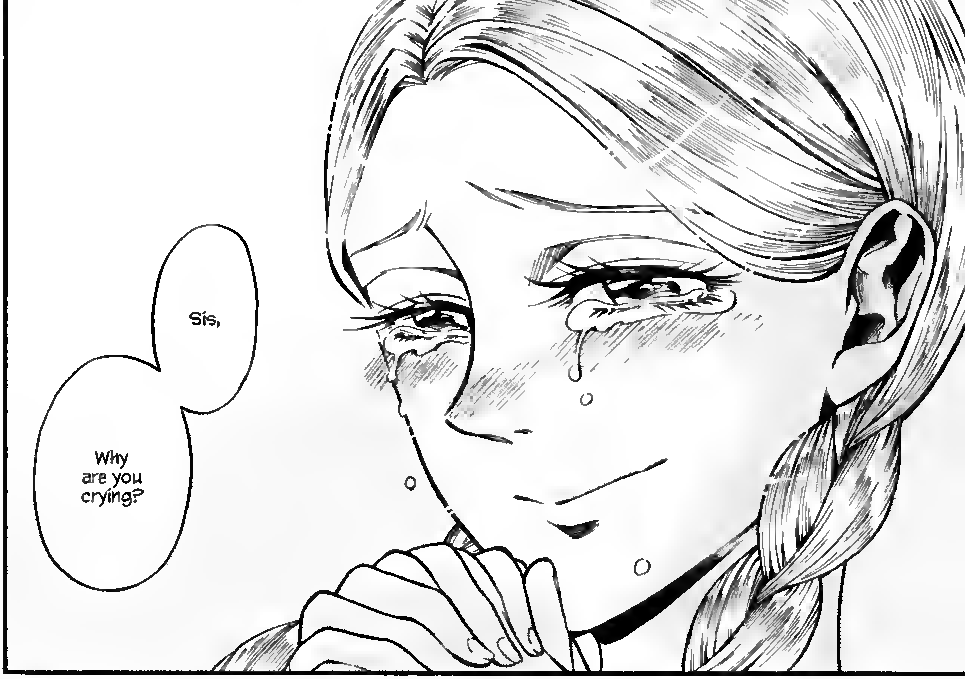
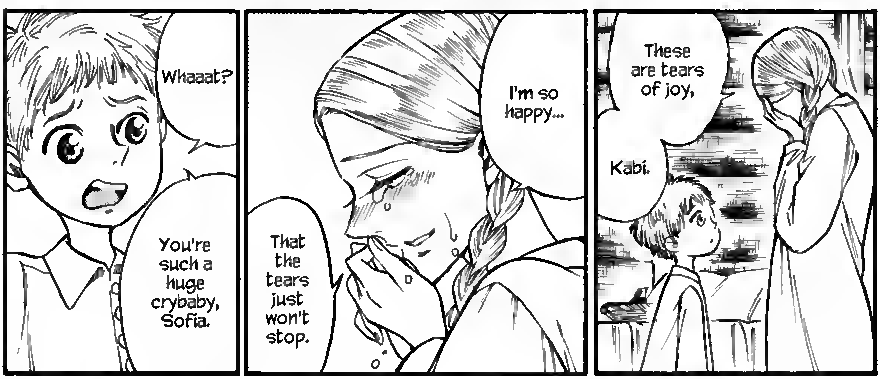
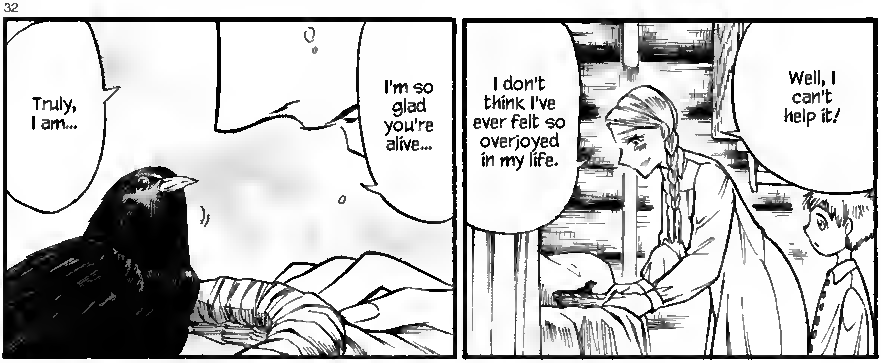
……
キョロ

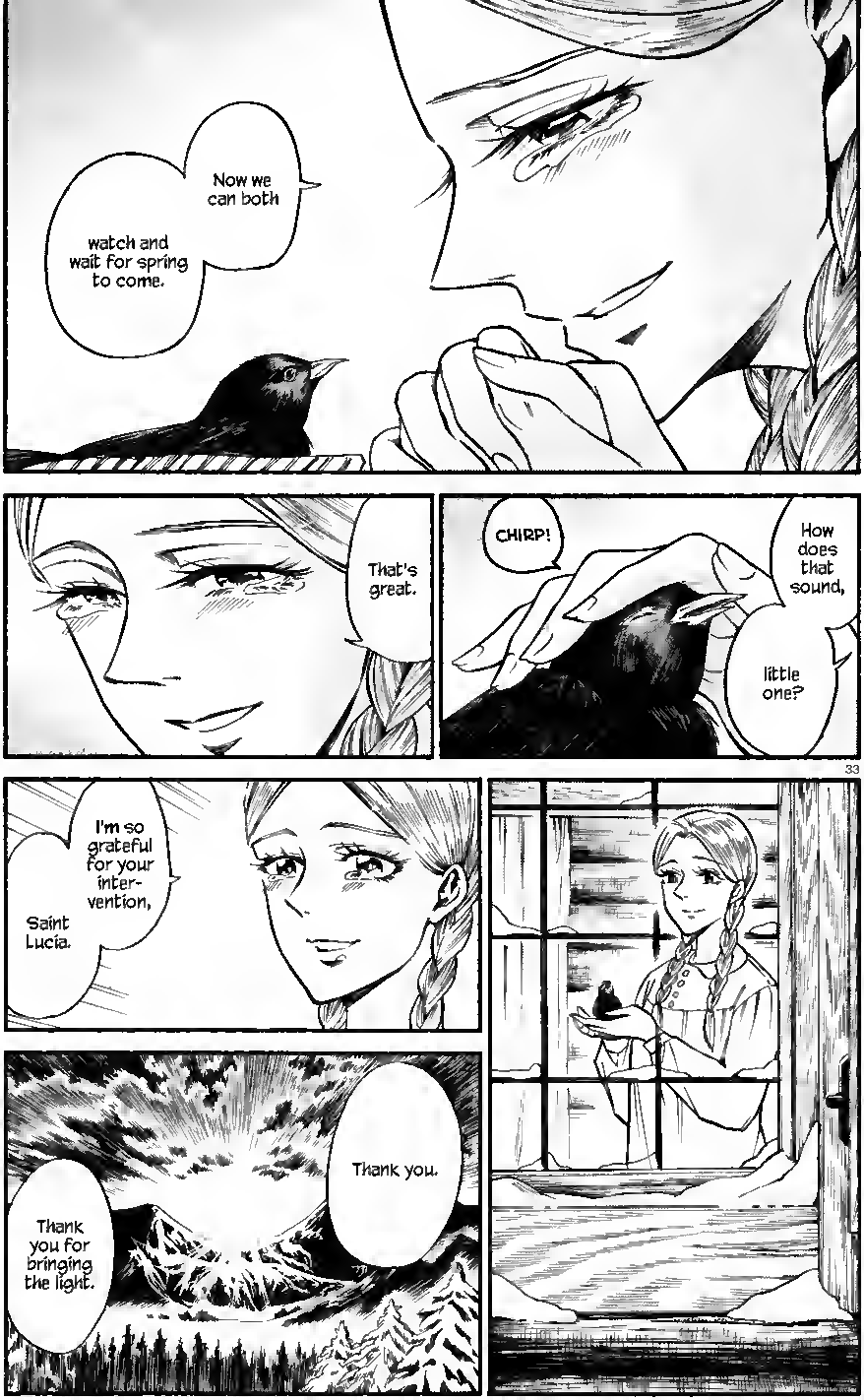

CHIRP!
CHIRP
CHIRP
My prayers...
What's hap-...
Sis?
THUMP
What are you talking about?
My prayers have been answered!
Whoa!


Sis,
Why are you crying?


Whaaat?
You're such a huge crybaby, Sofia.
That the tears just won't stop.
I'm so happy...
These are tears of joy,
Kabi.

32


Truly, I am...
I'm so glad you're alive...
I don't think I've ever felt so overjoyed in my life.
Well, I can't help it!


Now we can both watch and wait for spring to come.
That's great.
CHIRP!
How does that sound, little one?
33
I'm so grateful for your intervention, Saint Lucia.
Thank you.
Thank you for bringing the light.

Did something happen, Sofia?
You look rather cheerful.
Good morning.
You're up quite early today.
Grand-mother.
It woke up this morning.
I found it tugging at my sleeve with its beak
Oh, my!
CHIRP
Look!

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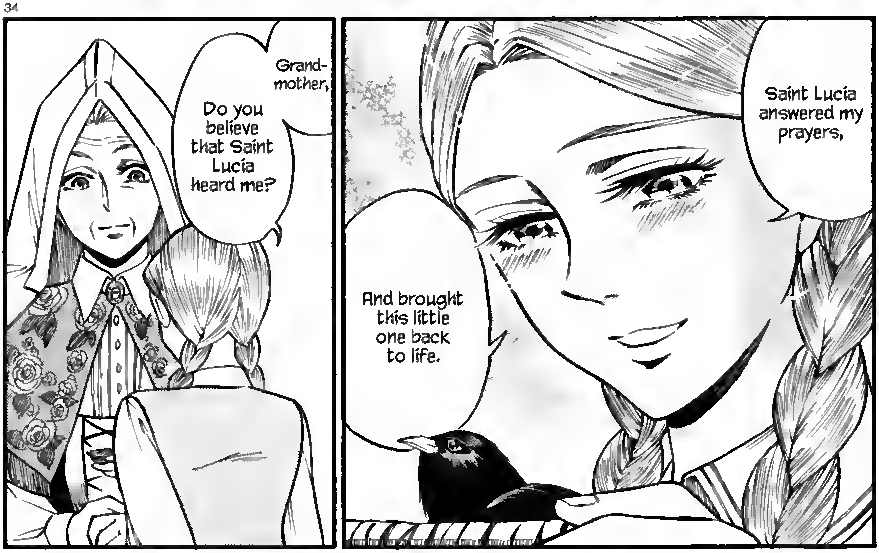
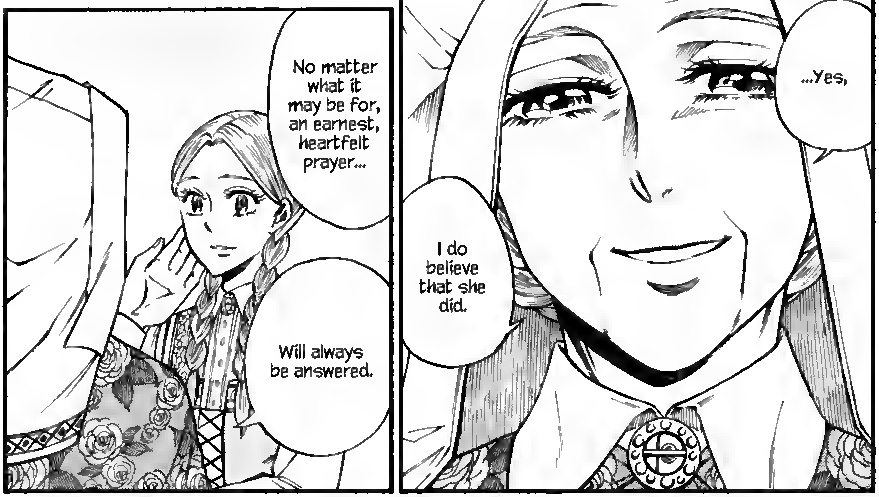
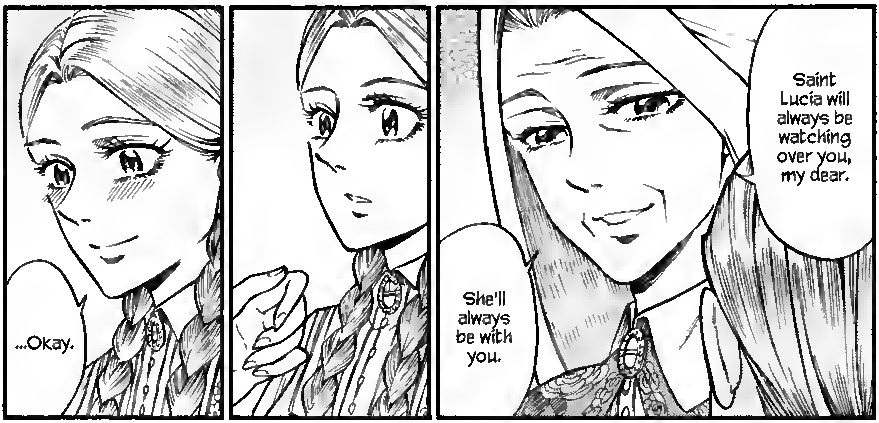

Grand-mother,
Do you believe that Saint Lucia heard me?
Saint Lucia answered my prayers,
And brought this little one back to life.


No matter what it may be for, an earnest, heartfelt prayer...
Will always be answered.
...Yes,
I do believe that she did.


...Okay.
Saint Lucia will always be watching over you, my dear.
She'll always be with you.

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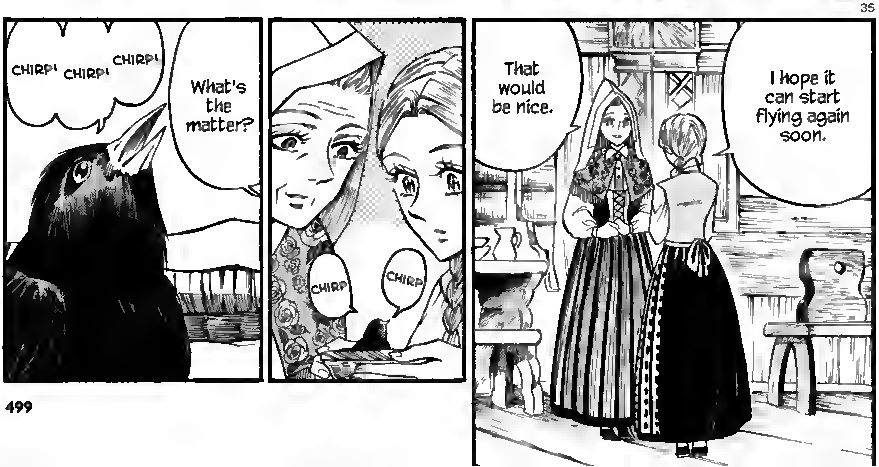
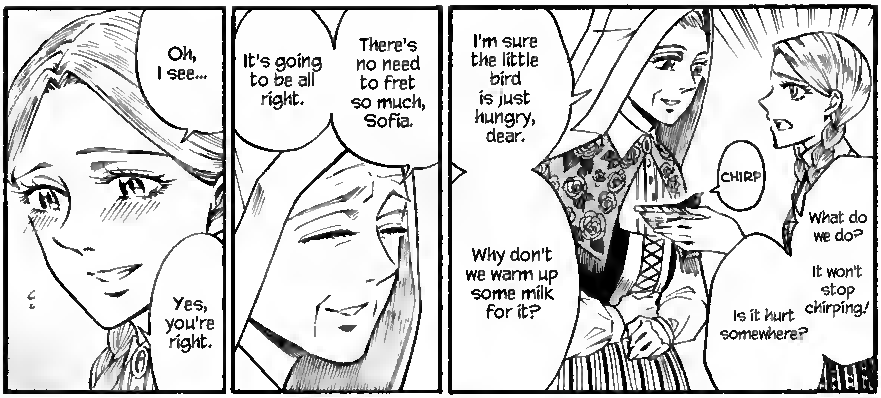
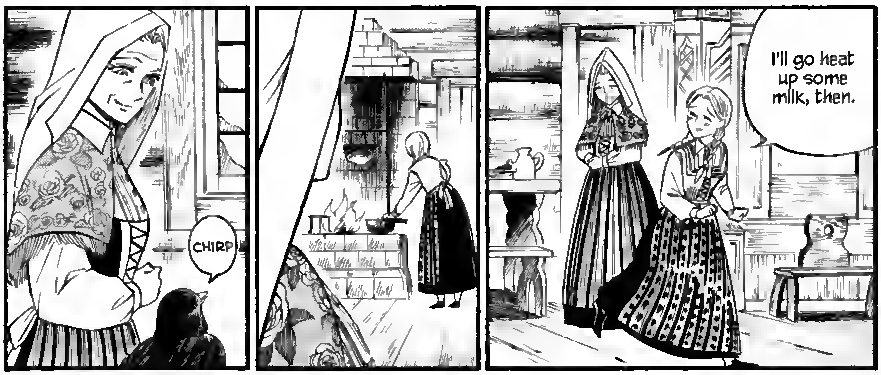

CHIRP! CHIRP! CHIRP!
What's the matter?
CHIRP
CHIRP
That would be nice.
I hope it can start flying again soon.


Oh, I see...
Yes, you're right.
It's going to be all right.
There's no need to fret so much, Sofia.
I'm sure the little bird is just hungry, dear.
Why don't we warm up some milk for it?
CHIRP
What do we do?
It won't stop chirping!
Is it hurt somewhere?


CHIRP
I'll go heat up some milk, then.

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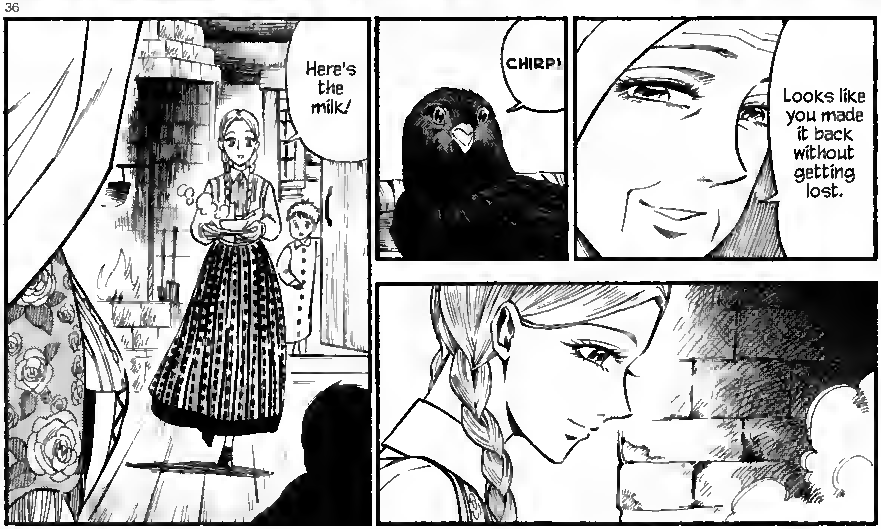
Here's the milk.
CHIRP!
Looks like you made it back without getting lost.

The End.

#EverydayHeroes Scans

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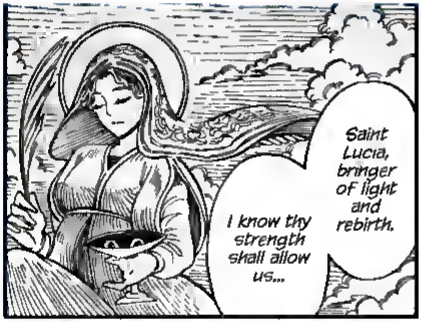
Released 08/29/2016



This story is based on Saint Lucia, a Christian saint commemorated (primarily in Scandinavian countries) on Saint Lucia's day. Saint Lucia's Day falls on the Winter Equinox, hence the reference to the Equinox in the manga. Lucia, also known as Lucy, is said to bring light to the darkness. The Scandinavian festivals celebrating her seem to date back to pagan times, and may be a synthesis of Christian and pre-Christian beliefs relating to the battle between the cold, dark winter and the bringer of light.

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HouseofGlass

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